Test Yourself: Top 10 Questions to Identify Invisible Resistance

Are You Successfully Identifying and Supporting People to Overcome Invisible Resistance to Change?

There's often a black hole between identifying what we want to achieve and getting there…we know how to enter a change process but it can turn into a very confusing and frustrating process trying to overcome obstacles we can't always clearly identify. We tend to be very clear about our goals, desired outcomes, and the future state we want to achieve, but how to get there may not be as clear.

The way to reaching desired outcomes is often paved with obstacles, some more obvious and apparent than others. Resistance to change, a wide variety of less effective response patterns to discomfort is one of the more powerful obstacles we need to overcome. It's often a result of blocks we put in our own way and in most cases, we can do a better job pinpointing what is happening to people, why they are struggling, and how to support them. Identifying the more invisible obstacles is often critical if we are to support people to achieve desired outcomes in a lasting, sustainable way.

Contrary to what I was taught, successfully identifying and supporting people to overcome resistance to change doesn't start after resistance comes up (that's truly too late). It starts with how we define what we are hoping to achieve, with efforts to allow invisible resistance to surface (like creating practice opportunities and following up) and a lot more! Here are the top 10 questions to ask yourself in order to effectively identify and support people to overcome invisible resistance to change:

	YES	NO
Is motivation followed by taking action?		

1 Additional insight:
- In some cases we want to adopt change in theory but we don't necessarily want to make the effort to achieve it.

	YES	NO
Have you created opportunities to highlight if invisible resistance is at play?		

2 Additional insight:
- Are there clear exercises and practice opportunities set up?
- Is there follow up and accountability?
- Without "assignments" and follow up, invisible resistance can hide in plain sight.

	YES	NO
Have you defined what the individual is hoping to achieve in a way that explores deep thinking and response patterns?		

3

Additional insight:
- Do people recognize which thinking patterns, behaviors, responses, and habits they need to let go of in order to achieve their desired outcomes?
- If Unlearning is required (if certain response patterns are already in place), it is critical to manage the process of letting go of pre-existing thinking and behavioral patterns.
- Identifying these deeper patterns will allow you to explore invisible resistance responses.

	YES	NO
Have you pinpointed how the individual responds to discomfort in general and how these responses may affect the coaching process going forward?		

4

Additional insight:
- The way people respond to discomfort is typically a deep emotional pattern which is not limited to one area of life. It is likely to come up and will block progress, if discomfort becomes part of the change (which is typically the case).
- Seemingly unrelated responses like withdrawing inward, negative-self talk, and procrastination (to name a few invisible-resistance responses) can block us from being able to make transformations.
- Providing the right skills very early in the coaching process makes a huge difference.

	YES	NO
Are you noticing a <u>consistent</u> effort to adopt changes into practice?		

5

Additional insight:
- Do people work through discomfort to try new ways of doing things or do they give in to the discomfort?
- Do people make up excuses or come up with all kinds of less reasonable reasons for why they are not <u>consistently</u> applying related practices?
- Are people trying to control or in any way force themselves to adopt new ways of doing things? In many cases, conscious motivation cannot sustain change, even if we are motivated and truly want to achieve new results…

	YES	NO

Is there a sufficient degree of introspection and comfort with vulnerability?		

6

Additional insight:
- Sometimes people are unable to recognize their feelings or uncomfortable speaking openly about their what they want, feel, or think which blocks them from being able to adopt change.
- Reactions like jumping to conclusions, thinking you already know what other people are saying before you truly listen, and an inability to be introspective are all good indications if insufficient comfort level with vulnerability.

	YES	NO
Is there an inability to see the need for change from other perspectives or a disagreement about what needs to change?		

7

Additional insight:
- Not agreeing is not necessarily a form of resistance. Among other things, frustration as a result of feeling unheard may look and feel like resistance although it isn't.
- In some cases, people are unable to be flexible and open enough to see that more than one perspective in possible, dismissing any perspective that does not match with their own.
- To identify this type of resistance, confirm that people are unwilling or unable to see the need for change because they are not open to or unable to see reality from other people's perspectives.

	YES	NO
Can you identify a general tendency to focus on urgent, concrete, all-or-nothing thinking, and short term goals without the ability to understand long-term, process-related elements?		

8

Additional insight:
- For some people, insufficient mastery of certain emotional skills can make it difficult to see the need for change and block them from adopting and sustaining desired changes.
- People who overly focus on short term, urgent, concrete items may have a general negative mindset (it often comes from the negating, critical thinking associated with analysis).
- An insufficient emphasis or understanding of the complexity of human processes in general and change in particular may result in thinking people can change on their own (that coaching and other support is not required).

	YES	NO

Are you noticing toxic or otherwise negative self-judgment patterns, perfectionistic, self-criticizing, behaviors or a self-diminishing perspective around making mistakes, and fear of failure?		
9 Additional insight: • While high standards push us to excel, an unforgiving, critical, negating perspective diminishes our ability to initiate and sustain change. • Clients may be fully aware of practicing these patterns (it will then typically be accompanied by high levels of anxiety) or completely oblivious and blind to it. • Specific emotional skills are required in order to move away from negative self-talk and sufficiently minimize the impact of these patterns and it's unique version of resistance to change.		

	YES	NO
Are you noticing change-related or unrelated heightened levels of agitation, impatience, or confusion?		
10 Additional insight: • Although we may not recognize it as related, change (especially change that requires re-wiring the brain) can cause stress and anxiety. • Despite being motivated and engaged, change that requires re-wiring can make people more sensitive. It may result in difficulty noticing details and reduced access to the mental space required in order to fully engage with adopting change.		

Certain approaches and skills allow us to support people overcome these and many other types of resistance responses by:

• Creating a foundation of trust, effective communication about the change, and transparency.
• Identifying as quickly and early as possible which emotional skills in general and Change-Readiness Skills in particular will support people to respond more effectively to discomfort.
• Identifying which behaviors and responses need to be unlearned.
• Supporting people to adopt needed skills through practice, facilitating the letting go of previous responses, and providing an effective accountability structure which will support people to overcome resistance to change.

Ask us how to identify which skills and principles will support people in your side of the world.

With deepest appreciation,

Reut and the KCI Team.